

(14 a)

Introductory Notes  
ON THE PHILOSOPHER MOTSE

by H. W. Luce

- (1) is aggressive war - per definition
- (2) energy is matter in motion, 2500 yrs before Einstein
- (3) Highly sophisticated view of religion as social bond - even if dead ancestors don't exist, the sacrifices are not a waste but bring family & village forces together for good social time - Wang Yang-ming - p. 39, 40, 41

I. HIS TIME Motse lived (470-391 B.C.) in the middle part of the Chou Dynasty (Cir. 1100-256 B.C.) at the period known as that of the "contending or Warring States" (Cir. 480-221 B.C.). Motse was born about a decade after Confucius (who lived 551-479 B.C.) and died about two decades before Mencius (who lived 372-289 B.C.). As the name of the period suggests, it was a time of great unrest. The power of the Emperor was nominal and shadowy, the real power being in the hands of the feudal war-lords of the time, the Dukes of Ch'u, Ch'i, Chin and Yueh and other States who were constantly contending among themselves for dominance.

It was a time of great extremes of wealth and poverty where the rich lived in great luxury and the poor had to endure hard toil and stern existence. It was also a period when the artistic spirit was expressed in beautiful bronzes for palace and temple and when, for the rich, fine silken garments were exquisitely embroidered and their chariots, sedan-chairs and pleasure boats were ornamented with intricate and varied designs.

It was, too, a period when there was a great out-flowering of literature which has greatly affected Chinese thought and culture from that day to this.

II. HIS BIOGRAPHY. Of his life little is known. It seems clear that Motse was a native of the State of Lu (in Shantung), as was also Confucius and Mencius. It is believed that Motse had a short experience as an official administrator in the Sung State, as had Confucius in the Lu State; but for the most part both of them, as opportunity offered, acted as advisers to the heads of various States or taught their followers in schools they had established. When Motse noted among his pupils a particularly well-qualified student, he would ask him to come and study with him in order to prepare for possible official appointment. Strongly opposed to offensive war, Motse had great inventive skill in the arts of defensive war.

Through his life he was moved to untiring and sacrificial action in the endeavor to help the various States toward better government especially in the matter of harmony and peace. Always he expressed in his own person the sympathy, unselfishness, bravery, and the simplicity and economy of living he advocated for the State and demanded of his followers.

One incident may be given in illustration of this spirit: Hearing that the large State Ch'u had invented a new kind of "cloud ladder" (for scaling city-walls) and intended to use them in an attack on the small State of Sung, at once Motse started to walk the very long journey to Ch'u. He went in such haste day and night, almost without rest, so that "his feet were twice blistered and his clothes torn to shreds to provide bandages for them."

By his boldness and logic he had apparently convinced the Duke of Ch'u that he should lay aside his plans. But Motse was not deceived. He sensed that the Duke was meditating how to get around the matter by putting Motse himself out of the way and thus defeat Sung. So Motse said to the Duke: "My disciples Chin Hua Li and others numbering three hundred are already armed with my implements of defence waiting on the city wall of Sung for the bandits (!) from Ch'u. Though I be murdered, you cannot exhaust the defense of Sung." The Lord of Ch'u then replied: "Well, then let us not attack Sung any more."

Motse took issue with the Confucianists in regard to their lack of economy as shown in their extremely elaborate rituals and ceremonies, in the long mourning-period of three years, and in their costly funerals. He also differed from them in the conception of the Will of Heaven.

III. HIS TEACHINGS AND LITERARY WORK. Of seventy-one chapters or sections of which there is record, only fifty-three are extant. We give the titles of ten of the most important of them below; these indicate the general trend of his teaching. In doing so, we use the differing though similar titles of two or three translators which in themselves are suggestive:

1. "Universal Love," or "Love of All Without Discrimination".



2. "Against Aggressive War", or "Against Taking the Initiative in War", or "Condemnation of Offensive War."
3. "The Will of Heaven."
4. "The Importance of Promoting Men of Character to Public Office", or "On the Practical Recognition of the Best Men", or "Exaltation of the Virtuous" (virtue including wisdom and talent).
5. "The Importance of Securing a Unified Method of Public Administration", or "On Uniting By Accepting the Ruling of the Superior", or "Identification With the Superior."
6. "Economy and Public Expenditure".
7. "Economy in Funeral Rites."
8. "The Existence of Spirits", or "On Being Clear About the Spirit".
9. "Against Music and Other Luxuries".
10. "Against Determinism", or "Against Fatalism", or "Anti-fatalism".

The main essays by Motse have come down to us in three versions which have both similarities and differences in content. It is not known how these versions came about, thus giving rise to a mild synoptic problem. Some have thought that they were given or written at different times and places. Others surmise that they were taken down by different followers of Motse. In order to facilitate their understanding we have roughly "harmonized" (as given below) three of the essays, namely, "Universal Love", "Against Aggressive War" and "The Will of Heaven". In doing so we have, in the main, used the translation (1927) of L. Tomkinson, missionary in Szechuan Province in China. In addition some quotations have been taken from a more literal translation (1934) by Y. P. Mei, Professor in Yenching University.

For a period of a century Motse's teachings had very great influence and no little opposition. He formed a strong inner group of several hundred disciples trained in military defence and pledged to carry on in opposition to aggressive war even to sacrificing their lives.

For a time three Schools of Moism flourished. Gradually reference to it practically ceased, though no doubt its influence became a part of the long

life-stream of the Chinese people. Reasons for its disappearance may be found in its opposition to Confucianism as indicated above, to his position in regard to war in a warlike world, and to the ascetic and heroic discipline required by his teaching in a period whose leaders were given to luxury. However, its influence was noticeably great for a long period as seen from the somewhat unfair and unjustified criticism of Mencius in the generation following. "The words of Yang Chu and Motse fill the Empire. If you listen to people's discourse throughout it, you will find that they have adopted the views either of Yang Chu or of Motse". (Yang Chu was the arch Epicurean and Materialist of the day.)

Several philosophers who came after Mencius made brief mention of Motse; though critical of his teaching, some of them recognized with high approval the selfless, sacrificing spirit of Motse. In later dynasties (the Han, the Eastern Chin, the Tang, and the Ming) brief mention is made of Motse's works; but it is to the Taoists that we are indebted for the preservation of his Essays." In the fourth century A.D. reference is made to his method of "transforming white and yellow metals (probably silver and gold)....For over two thousand years his writings received scanty attention and if the Taoists had not found certain elements in his teaching to their liking and so included his works in their encyclopedias, it is probable that the great bulk of his writings would have been completely lost".

Professor Williamsom of Chee-loo University in Shantung, referring to the chapters mentioned above, makes the following summarizing observations: "There is included a fairly complete system of Logic, with the sources of Knowledge defined as History, Reasoning and Experiment. Terms are defined as General, Specific, and Individual, while proposition, hypothesis, methods of Agreement, and Difference, and Syllogisms all find a place in this ancient book.

"Matter is defined as separated molecules, and is conceived as being capable of transformation, but not of destruction." It was the Alchemy of Mo Tzu which made him such a favorite with the Taoists. They say that he discovered the

Elixir of life, called "fu ling", and that he lived to be five hundred years old. That Space and Time are relative, and that Energy is Matter in motion are some of the remarkable definitions which modern scholars are discovering in this book of 2,000 years ago.

IV. PRESENT-DAY ESTIMATES:

1. Professor Wilbur H. Long, University of Southern California:

"Motse is still a living thinker. The fundamental principles which he taught, freed from the limitations of their times, are as sound and as powerful for human good today as they were in the ancient golden age of Chinese philosophy. A purpose-governed cosmos, a God-appointed moral law, spiritual personality as the essence of Deity, moral freedom and personal responsibility, the supremacy of the Divine Will in social and political life, the law of universal love among men sanctioned by a man loving Divine Spirit, the inwardness and social fruitage of goodness, humanitarianism, the appeal to logic and intelligence, the progressive mind, the distinction between defensive and offensive war--these remain profound doctrines challenging acceptance by the mind of man today.

"Motse's thought is essentially one with the personalisms and the theistic idealisms of the West which find in moral and creative Selfhood the clue to the most real as well as the most divine, the end of being, the goal of education, and the hope of society. China can still look profitably to this great man and the general philosophic tradition which he represents for its principles in the new era of the Orient. To us of the West he reveals something of the little-known achievement of China's ancient intellectual and spiritual history, and at the same time he reminds us forcibly of the underlying community of mind and the essential unity of the human spirit among all peoples."

2. Professor H. R. Williamson, Chee-loo University, Shantung:

"Critics find it difficult to describe him. Perhaps he is most generally known as the Apostle of Universal Love. He was a Stoic without the



Stoic's fatalism: a Spartan with pacific convictions: a Utilitarian with a religious mentality: a Socialist believing in an Autocracy of Virtue. Hu Shih calls him a Politico-religious philosopher, Liang Ch'i Ch'ao a big Marx and a little Christ. In conclusion the writer would like to render his personal tribute by adapting Tennyson's lines:--

"How should China, dreaming of her sons,  
Hope more for these than some inheritance  
Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,  
Thou noble prophet of the State to be.  
Laborious for her people and her poor,  
Far-sighted summoner of war and waste  
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace.  
Beyond all title, and a household name  
Hereafter, through all times, Mo Tzu the Good."

3. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek:

When General Chiang Kai-shek was a prisoner in Sian (after being kidnapped) he wrote on Dec. 15th, 1936: "I deplore my misjudgement of character and the consequent misplacement of my confidence."

On Dec. 18th, 1936: "A week has elapsed since the revolt, but I have decided to disregard my personal safety; my heart is at peace. I read the writings of the philosopher Motse to while away the time."

4. Professor Y. P. Mei, Yenching University, Pei-ping:

"Unfortunately for the intellectual world, Confucianism finally won out through suppression of its rival systems, including Moism. As a formal discipline, Moism has been left little noticed through all these centuries, but as an habitual way of life it has taken deep root in the soil of the nation and the fibre of the people. The vitality of the philosophy is further evidenced by the fact that Young China in her present period of unrest is again eagerly turning to her old teacher who taught under rather similar conditions over two millenniums ago."